Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF 3 June – July 1996

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Taizé
EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS
Stuttgart
28th december - 1st January '96/97

A Sign of Reconciliation

The next European meeting of young adults will be held from December 28, 1996 to January 1, 1997 in southern Germany, in the town of Stuttgart.

The Baden-Württemberg region, of which Stuttgart is the capital, shares borders with three countries: France, Switzerland and Austria. Though not a particularly large city itself, Stuttgart is at the center of an urban belt with a total population of some two and a half million persons.

The invitation to hold the meeting here was addressed to Taizé by both the Protestant and Catholic bishops of the city. Once the choice had been finalized and was then announced, interest locally was quick in growing. Initial preparation gatherings will begin in May. The following are some of the reactions received from Stuttgart residents:

"I work in organizing the Spanish mission here in Stuttgart and I am glad to hear about the upcoming European meeting. There are many foreign communities present here and it will be a joy for us to receive the young Europeans. By taking part in the meeting together with all the other parishes, we shall surely get to know one another better as well as better appreciate our respective gifts."

A WONDERFUL CHALLENGE

"In a city such as Stuttgart, money sometimes seems to be the measure of everything, whether it be in judging the success of an event or the value of a building. Thanks to the European meeting, we shall have the chance to discover how a city is first of all a place in which to live together and share. We shall receive people unpretentiously, offering them what we have and what we are, learning to pay more attention to our neighbors and those we meet day after day. How wonderful a challenge it will be for us to try to host everyone in families, like last year in Poland."

"Seeing so many energetic young Europeans in our city will do us a world of good. We need to be able to start new friendships and to see the human dimensions of Europe grow. I think too of my friends who have no connection with the Church and who, for the very first time, will have the opportunity to discover another face of the Church."

"We heard the news about the next European meeting only a few days ago. The thought that we shall have the chance to open our doors to others already fills us with joy. Our concern is to get those who have no contact with the Church interested also. It could lead to much new life in our parish. It will be an important opportunity to show how reconciliation is possible between the generations, between different parish groups, as well as with neighboring parishes of other denominations and the many foreign communities."

Christ Jesus, you are risen, and never do you want us to be shaken by spiritual desolation. When we have understood that no one is ever excluded from your forgiveness, nor from your love, our hearts change and become calm. We ask you: what do you expect of me? And the Holy Spirit answers: I pray in you, dare to give your life, dare to go that far.

Prayer by Brother Roger of Taizé, Easter 1996

PRAYER

for the Easter season and for Pentecost

Singing

Psalm

between the Psalm verses,
an Alleluia can be sung

- I love you, Lord, my strength, my saviour, you have saved me from violence. God is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer is my God.
- God, you are the rock where I take refuge, my shield, my mighty help and my stronghold. Lord, you are worthy of all praise, when I call I am saved from my foes.
- In my anguish I called to you, Lord; I cried to you, God, for help. From your temple you heard my voice, my cry came to your ears.
- They assailed me in the day of my misfortune, but you, Lord, were my support. You brought me forth into freedom, you saved me because you loved me.

(from Psalm 18)

Song

Reading

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he answered, "Unless I can see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe." Eight days later, the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, "Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving anymore but believe." Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him: "You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

(John 20,24-29)

Song

Silence

Litany

Kyrie eleison can be sung after each petition

- O Christ, you poured forth on your disciples the Holy Spirit received from the Father: guide us by the same Spirit.
- O Christ, you send us forth to announce your forgiveness: renew the earth in unity.
- O Christ, you promised that the Spirit would teach us everything: enlighten our faith.
- O Christ, you promised the Spirit of peace: renew the earth in your peace.
- O Christ, you promised to send the Spirit of truth: increase in us the knowledge of your love.
- O Christ, your Spirit fills the universe: may it shine forth in each one of us.

Our Father

Song

Prayer

O Risen Christ, when we have the simple desire to welcome your love, little by little in our innermost being, a flame lights up. Fed by the Holy Spirit, this flame of love may be very faint at first. Incredibly, it continues to glow. When we understand that you love us, the trusting of faith becomes our real song of praise.

or: use the prayer from the first page.

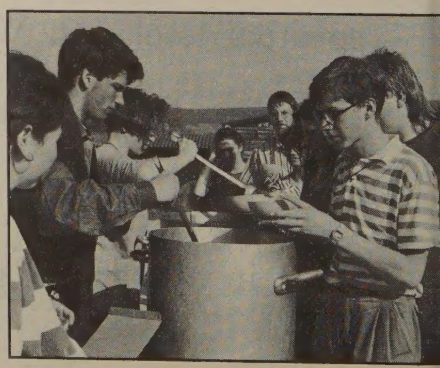
Singing

Every week throughout the year, from Sunday to Sunday, it is possible to participate in meetings that bring together young people from all over Europe as well as from other continents. There are also meetings organised for adults and families.

Preparing to come to Taizé means enjoying an opportunity to meet thousands of young and not-so-young people from all the nations, especially during the summer. In the course of a few days, trust springs up, new friendships are made and countries that were mere patches of colour on the map become places where young people we know live, people who are committed to searching and making the choice to be witnesses of the presence of the Risen Christ.

Each week, everyone is encouraged to set out on an inner adventure, to participate fully, united to many others by the same search and supported by them, as expressed by the following two accounts:

"Why do people, be they young, single, married or a family, keep on coming back to Taizé?" This question was posed by young parents. They continued: "Maybe because it is a place that welcomes all. That welcomes them in their time of distress, during moments of joy, in their search and in their doubts whether they are alone, as a couple or with children. Stimulated by this welcome, our hearts begin to open up; leaving behind our fears and doubts, we set out on the road to meet with others. Sometimes, like Elijah when he set out on his journey, it is first of all a very human food of friendship and of welcome that dresses our wounds and brings refresh-



Meetings of Young Adults in Taizé

nent." Then God asks us in prayer, "But hat are you doing here?" And we nswer: "I am full of zeal for God."

"Before leaving Taizé, our little group as reflecting on what it is that we ould like to bring back with us from aizé. Many had thought about the beauful days spent, the friendships they ould like to continue to foster, the inense experiences of prayer and the ilence. I thought about how important it as for me, each day, in my own home, o find at least ten minutes of silence. It as only in prayer that I discovered what as most essential for me: the desire for God. In my work as a religious teacher, here teaching is combined with the aith, an authentic confrontation with the mystery of faith is difficult."

Something new for Summer 1996: for hose who know how to play a musical nstrument and who are able to bring it with them, there will be a workshop each week on "How to use these instruments o better support the singing in our prayer groups and in our parishes?" A few proficient instrumentalists will be invited to accompany the singing in the church on Saturday and Sunday (only wind-instruments, cello, classical guitar; a high degree of proficiency is necessary to be able to play in the church).

Those who have previously been to Taizé can help with the meetings this summer by staying for several weeks. In such cases, an itinerary of deepening the faith will be proposed. At the same time they will also be given responsibilities for welcoming others. Depending on individual circumstances, they can be welcomed free of charge from the second or third week onwards. Those interested are advised to write to us in advance.

Registrations: Please send the registration form opposite.

For further information, write to: Meetings, Taizé Community, 71250 Taizé, France. Tel (33) 85.50.30.02 (if urgent (33) 85.50.30.30), Fax (33) 85.50.30.16 (N.B. beginning 18th October 1996, a 3 will be added after the code for France: (33) 385.50 etc.). To ensure a good welcome for everybody this summer, those who are able should plan not to come during the weeks of 28th July to 4th August and 4th August to 11th August.

REGISTRATION FORM

to be sent to: Meetings, TAIZÉ - COMMUNITY, 71250 TAIZÉ, France. Tel: (+33) 85 50 30 02, Fax (+33) 85 50 30 16

First Name

Family Name

Address

County or City & State Post code

Telephone : .....

Occupation : ..... Age: .....

✘ I wish to participate in the meetings from ..... to .....

(Please circle "yes" or "no")

✘ Will bring my own tent : yes / no .

✘ Means of transport: Nuneaton Coaches other coach minibus car train other : .....

✘ For the disabled, adult group-leaders, those who cannot sleep on the floor, please fill in the following:

✘ I need a bed yes/no. If "yes" please circle below who you are: woman / man couple / family with ..... children (age of the children : .....) disabled person / helper of disabled person

✘ I receive the Letter of Taizé : yes / no

✘ I have already been to Taizé : yes / no (last stay : month ..... year .....)

The Church and the Kingdom of God

(in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles)

Jesus proclaimed the "Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt 4,23): God comes to illuminate the world with his presence, becoming all in all (1 Cor 15,28). Christ's resurrection confirms and intensifies this hope to the point that, when he first appears, his disciples expect an immediate realization of God's promise. The risen one answers that God alone knows "the times and periods," but that they shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit in order to become his witnesses. Hope for the kingdom remains, but the testimony of the apostles, sent out to proclaim the Gospel and found churches, becomes the new focus (see Acts 1,6-8).

What exactly is the relationship between the Church and the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed? Our understanding of the Church depends to a great extent on the answer we give to this question. For some readers, the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles reveals a distinction, even an opposition, between the two realities. Reading between the lines, they see a story of disappointment: the kingdom of heaven, proclaimed by Jesus, delays in coming, and in order to console themselves, Jesus' followers set out to found and organize new communities. From such a viewpoint, the Church takes the place of the kingdom. The historical institution replaces "the feast in the kingdom of heaven where many will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Matt 8,11).

A careful reading of the same texts, however, uncovers an underlying unity between the Church and the kingdom. Firstly, both are objects of expectant waiting. The apostles, together with Mary, waited in prayer (Acts 1,4 and 1,14) for the full realization of the Church just as they do for the coming of the kingdom. They looked to receive the Holy Spirit, the fire of love and source of communion, which was to gather believers together into a single body, so that they would be "of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4,32).

There is no doubt that it is at Pentecost, with its outpouring of the Spirit, that the Church appears. One could thus take it as an ancient reality (for us today, already some two thousand years old!), to be commemorated rather than awaited. But well after Pentecost, Christians continued praying with the words: "May your Church gather together all corners of the earth into your kingdom" (Didache 9,4, 1st century). This prayer, "May your Church gather together," is a variant on the request made in the Our Father, "Your kingdom come." The Church and the kingdom are not opposing realities, for both are part of our prayer and our hope. If they are both already present through the Holy Spirit, we do not cease looking forward to their full realization. This helps clarify a curious fact one can note in the early part of Acts, that is, that the word "Church" is almost entirely absent. Could it be that, during this early period, Christians hesitated in proclaiming that the "Church of God" had come to full realization precisely because it was seen as a reality intimately tied to the kingdom of God?

On Pentecost day, the apostle Peter cites a passage from the prophet Joel in which God says: "I will pour out my Spirit on every living being." He adds that this will be "during the final days" (Acts 2,17). If he modifies the letter of the text, he has not altered its meaning, because with the Holy Spirit's being poured out on men, women, young and old, human history has come full course. The Holy Spirit is no longer given to one person or to another but is "poured out" on all. Like water irrigating the earth, the kingdom of God transfigures the world. The Christian community born from this outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2,42-47; 4,32-35) belongs also to these "final days." In its very mystery, the Church belongs to the future; it is always on hope's doorstep, in order to enter the festival of the kingdom. Those who have come from "all nations under the heavens" shall join together with Christians to sing the marvels of God in every language (Acts 2,5-11), "taking their place in the feast of the kingdom of God."

Insomuch as it is a human grouping present within history, the Church draws its identity from the past, from the founding acts of Christ and the apostles which tradition brings to us across the centuries. However, beyond this historical transmission, there is the risen Christ who, ever and ever again, comes to us from God. Nor are the apostles merely figures of the past, founding fathers whose memory must somehow be kept alive. Together with the risen Christ, they belong to the world to come, just as it was said to them: "You shall eat and drink at my table in the kingdom" (Luke 22,30). It is not only by virtue of past events that the Church is apostolic, but also by giving a glimpse here on earth — through the joy of the liturgy and by mutual love, by its ministries and sacraments — the feast of the kingdom.

Being aware of this mysterious inter-relatedness of the kingdom of God and the Church does not imply our idealizing present reality. To the contrary, it enables us to contemplate with serenity all that is lacking in that communion of love. The person whose life is filled with expectant waiting does not let him or herself be undone by imperfection. He or she prays to God, just as Mary and the apostles did before Pentecost when they awaited the Church of God, and asks the Holy Spirit to gather the Church together and to give all its members one and the same love.

Through the Holy Spirit present in them, common prayer and mutual love lead us into the joy of Pentecost and the feast of a reunited Church. Within our Christian communities, what helps us to sense the deeper reality both hidden and present there: "the festal gathering" in the "city of the living God," with the angels and believers of all ages, together with Jesus who loves us (see Heb 12,22-24)?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD
JULY

These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.

Jr 1:4-8
1 Mon The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you.

Ps 27
2 Tue Of you, Lord, my heart says: "Seek his face!"

Jn 20:24-29
3 Wed St THOMAS
Jesus said to Thomas: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

Mt 5:38-42
4 Thu Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

1 Th 3:12-13
5 Fri May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May he confirm your hearts.

Jn 3:16-17
6 Sat God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Mt 11:28-30
7 SUN Jesus said: Come to me, you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.

Is 45:3-7
8 Mon The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name.

Mt 9:9-13
9 Tue As he walked, Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me". And he got up and followed him.

Lk 3:10-16
10 Wed John the Baptist said to the people: Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none. And anyone with something to eat must do the same.

Lk 24:13-35
11 Thu While two disciples were on their way to Emmaus, talking together about all that had happened, Jesus himself came up and walked with them.

Jr 3:12
12 Fri The Lord says to his people: Return to me, for I am merciful.

Ws 1:11-15
13 Sat God did not make death, he takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. He created all things for life.

Is 55:10-11
14 SUN The Lord says: As the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth and made it fertile, so is it with the word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me before having achieved its purpose.

Lk 6:36-38
15 Mon Jesus said: Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged.

Jn 12:23-26
16 Tue Jesus said: Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

2 Co 8:7-15
17 Wed Be generous, for you know the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ who became poor for your sake.

Mk 9:17-29
18 Thu A man said to Jesus: I believe! Help my lack of faith.

1 Th 5:12-22
19 Fri Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

Is 50:10
20 Sat Who among you reveres the Lord? Who among you walks in darkness and sees no light? Trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon your God.

Ps 86
21 SUN Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may revere you.

Mt 6:25-34
22 Mon Jesus said: Do not worry about your life. Seek first God's kingdom and his saving justice.

2 Th 3:1-5
23 Tue God is faithful, he will give you strength and protect you from the evil one.

Mt 19:16-22
24 Wed Jesus said to a rich young man: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

Mt 7:7-11
25 Thu St JAMES
Jesus said: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

1 P 3:8-12
26 Fri Do not repay one wrong with another. Seek peace and pursue it.

Is 50:4-9
27 Sat God wakens my ear every morning to listen as a disciple.

Mt 13:44-46
28 SUN Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for precious pearls; when he finds one of great value, he goes, sells all he has and buys it.

Heb 11:8-16
29 Mon By faith, Abraham answered God's call and set out for the land he was to inherit. And he set out without knowing where he was going.

2 S 22:17-20
30 Tue The Lord rescued me from enemies who were stronger than I; he set me in the open.

Jm 1:22-25
31 Wed James writes: Do not only listen to the Word, put it into practice.

JOHANNINE HOURS

LUKE 24:52

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

It is long before entering on the way of the cross that Jesus begins preparing his companions for his coming death. After his resurrection, Christ takes up, as it were, from where he had left off: he "opens their minds to understand the scriptures," sends them out, and urges them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The departure at his ascension is thus emptied of sadness and passive resignation.

In our own lives, the departure of a loved one can become an occasion for meeting the risen Lord and for opening ourselves to our own resurrection. However, at the moment of departure itself, suffering exposes us to the risk of despair. Despair sows confusion and would have us believe that nothing remains outside of pain, absurdity and misforture. Such suffering is part of that passage which is Easter, the birth into a new life.

Truth is not to be found in the emptiness we may wish to scrutinize nor in explanations which would only serve to justify separation. The truth indeed is that there is no separation. And yet, it is the heart alone which can say it, and we must listen to its voice in silence. "Even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, we do not know him in that way any longer" (2 Co 5:16).

When Christ leaves, his place remains empty. And we must leave it free, without giving way to worry or impatience. Knowing that this same place is filled by his presence is the most precious of treasures one can "possess". It is there that the Spirit of the risen Christ awaits us. Neither separations, nor time, nor even forgetfulness can still the heart which has chosen to love.

- In what ways can I prepare myself and the others who are entrusted to me, for living out the separations which are part of life, and to do so in the light of Christ?
- What helps sustain us as we wait on the presence of the consoling Spirit, the one who comes to inhabit every human separation?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

AUGUST

These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.

Mt 7:12

1 Thu Jesus said: Do to others as you would like them to do to you; this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Mt 12:1-8

2 Fri Jesus said: It is mercy that pleases me, not sacrifice.

Ne 8:8-12

3 Sat Do not be sad or afflicted: God's joy is your strength.

Rm 8:31-39

4 SUN St. Paul writes: I am certain of this: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Mt 7:24-27

5 Mon Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock.

Mt 17:1-8

6 Tue TRANSFIGURATION On the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, a bright cloud covered the disciples and a voice said: This is my beloved Son, on whom my favour rests; listen to him.

2 Tm 2:1-7

7 Wed Paul writes: Draw your strength from the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Th 5:12-22

8 Thu See that people do not pay back evil for evil, but always seek what is good, both among yourselves and for others.

1 Co 10:12-13

9 Fri God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. But when you are tempted, he will give you the means to stand up to it and will show you a way forward.

Jn 5:24-27

10 Sat Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me has passed from death to life.

Mt 14:22-33

11 SUN Jesus came towards his disciples, walking on the water, and they were terrified; but at once he said to them: Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.

Mk 4:26-29

12 Mon Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, whether he is awake or asleep, the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how.

2 Tm 1:6-18

13 Tue Paul writes to Timothy: I remind you now to fan into a flame the gift God has placed in you. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of inward strength, of love and of self-control.

Mt 6:19-21

14 Wed Jesus said: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.

Lk 1:46-55

15 Thu THE VIRGIN MARY Mary said: My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of his humble servant.

Heb 10:22-25

16 Fri Let us hold to the hope we profess, without wavering, for God who has promised is faithful.

Lk 9:46-48

17 Sat Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

Rm 11:29,33-36

18 SUN Paul writes: God never revokes his gifts or his call.

Pr 23:15-19

19 Mon Let your heart remain constant in the adoration of God; for there is a future and your hope will not come to nothing.

Mt 25:31-40

20 Tue Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

Si 4:1-10

21 Wed Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and do not be cowardly in acting justly. And you will be like a child of the Most High who will love you more than your own mother does.

Mk 10:42-45

22 Thu Jesus said to his disciples: You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects and make their power felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.

1 Tm 4:12-16

23 Fri Paul writes to Timothy: You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not neglect it.

2 Th 1:11-12

24 Sat May God fulfill every good purpose of yours by his power and complete all that you have been doing by faith.

Ps 138

25 SUN I thank you, God, for your love and your faithfulness; you have given new strength to my heart.

Lm 3:54-57

26 Mon You came near when I called you, Lord, and you said, "Do not be afraid."

Mt 19:27-29

27 Tue Jesus said: Anyone who leaves home, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or fields for my sake will receive much more and will inherit eternal life.

Lk 6:36-38

28 Wed Jesus said: Give, and it will be given to you. A full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use will be the measure used for you.

2 Co 13:11-13

29 Thu Paul writes: Live in joyfulness. Encourage one another. Be of one mind and live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Mt 10:1-10

30 Fri Jesus said to his disciples: As you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

Jn 12:47-50

31 Sat Jesus said: I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

JOHANNIN HOUR

LUKE 15:11-2

What could be any crueler parents than to see thes selves reduced, in their children eyes, to the role of a material pr vider, and to have their hearts nored? What could be more u bearable than to see one's ov child ruin his or her life, or lose th way, without being able to lift ev a finger to help them?

If the father in the parable c hold firm in the face of sufferi and keep his love intact, if he c throw his arms wide open when h son shows the first sign of ope ness, it is because his gaze h never left his son. He does n consider his own predicament, n does he contemplate his own h miliation. He does not measu the distance that separates the nor the lost time and opportunitie He does not ponder his son's su fering or the danger he is in, t result of which would be only heighten his own anguish.

From the beginning, he believe that his son is made for the fre dom he is seeking, even if th quest bears the cost of possib mistakes. It is not the son's fau which will diminish the father's re olution. He continues to believe him, regardless of the situation ar the reasons for worry. He know that his son will one day be able perceive his open heart and fin rest there. He knows that h freely-given love will in the end e able him to discover the real natu of his quest and transfigure his e tire life. Then, freedom will not on be that first freedom which mea to exercise his own choices b that more fecund freedom whic gives of itself, and which leads t that widening horizon of commu nion.

The faithfulness of one alone enough for the two of them. Upo the son's return, few words are e changed. There are no explana tions, no lessons to be drawn Only the joy of the father, who free to proclaim what has alway been the secret of his life: givin is what advances through all ob stacles and heals everything.

- For which persons or in whic situations do I need to rely on th attitude of the father, so that I ca continue loving until the da when forgiveness is finally we comed?
- What ways and means can I in vent within daily life to expres and share the joy of forgive ness?

Listening to the Continents

Netherlands

A Meeting in Rotterdam

On the evening of April 19, there were more than 5000 persons present for prayer in Saint Lawrence's Reformed Church in Rotterdam. Never before had the walls of Saint Lawrence's, located in the commercial center of the city, received such a large number of young people. Surprised shoppers watched as they converged and entered, coming not only from Rotterdam but from throughout Holland.

Brother Roger was there, together with four other brothers of the community. Though the invitation had come initially from the Catholic bishop, Adrianus van Luyn, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the diocese, several church leaders from various Protestant denominations were in attendance as well.

Speaking at the end of prayer to those who had come, Brother Roger emphasized the importance of Christ's continual presence through the Holy Spirit: "What astonishes us about Christ is his presence. He is not visible to our eyes and never does he impose himself on us. But, risen from the dead, Christ could say to each of us: 'Are you not aware that, by the Holy Spirit, I live in you? Never forget that you are inhabited.' Even if we often feel nothing of this mysterious presence, it remains there, forever." Brother Roger concluded with a call to reconciliation: "Let us prepare ourselves, by the year 2000, for countless reconciliations, within families, with friends, and of course between Christians of different denominations. Those of the West will pay attention to the testimony of contemplative life given by the Orthodox churches. The Holy Spirit has enabled them to pass through the worst of human trials. We will also learn to recognize the goodness present in so many human hearts, whether they be believers or not."

Many young people remained afterwards, praying around the icon of the cross and singing late into the evening.

Thanks to a local radio link — which broadcasted for some three hours — many inhabitants both of Rotterdam and the region who were otherwise unable to attend prayer could listen and take part from their homes.

The meeting had been prepared long in advance, over a period of several months, together with over seventy young people coming from different churches. The young people went to schools and visited various groups throughout the western half of Holland. The more than 200 contacts made provided a rare opportunity: young people could be invited personally to the prayer itself, and a unique occasion was given to speak about faith. The young people contacted, for example through the schools, often had no connection with any church, and yet manifested deep inner searching.

Thanks to the long preparation beforehand, this evening of prayer will not remain just a simple memory. Already, young people are being invited to continue gathering for a similar prayer to be held once a month. Some have offered their help to sing or to play a musical instrument so that the follow-up prayers can be as beautiful as possible. Little groups have decided to continue with visiting groups, for example in local schools. Meanwhile, a new series of smaller gatherings is being planned in Holland for the beginning of next year, to continue this pilgrimage of trust throughout the country.

Poland

After the European Meeting

The young people from all over Europe who took part in the European meeting in Poland often talk about all they discovered thanks to the welcome they received from the families and the parishes of Wroclaw.

In Wroclaw itself and the surrounding region, regular prayers and meetings continue what was experienced during the meeting. The various contacts and the responsibilities taken on by the young people in the daily life of the neighbourhoods are intensifying. Here are some examples:

In a little town next to Wroclaw, some of the young people are making visits to the prison:

"Like others in Wroclaw and in the other towns of the region where there is a prison, we contacted the prison governor in our town. Here, the prison for long-term prisoners is a frightening place. Along with our chaplain, we obtained permission to visit every month to celebrate the Eucharist and for a meeting afterwards.

"On a Saturday afternoon, we meet in front of the door of the prison. After the identity check, we cross a courtyard, we climb the stairs, and we see the first faces behind the bars. We are accustomed to this now; it's our seventh visit. We touch the out-stretched hands. At this moment, we don't think that these are the hands of guilty men; we think of their need for a gesture of welcome and trust. Gradually, the prisoners start coming in for the celebration of the Eucharist in the sports hall where they have prepared an altar. There are several dozen of them. We sit among them so that they can feel that we are not afraid of them. At the beginning, I wanted to distribute the song sheets. But they said: 'We don't need them, we know the songs by heart.' For the last few months about ten of them have been meeting every week to pray together. They sing loudly, 'Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.' I have the strange feeling that Christ is present here, in the midst of those who most desire to experience his love which forgives. And I tell myself that it is here with these people that we have to discover Christ.

"During the conversation in little groups following the celebration, I remember a visit to the prison in Landsberg, during the European meeting in Munich two years ago. The question was asked then: 'Is it possible to be born again, to begin a new life here in prison?' One of them expressed his joy: 'Ever since you started praying and singing with us, my heart has begun to beat differently, and my eyes have seen a new reality. Despite being in prison, I have become free inwardly. All that God has created is so beautiful! All this had escaped my attention until now.' We got onto the subject of places where people can start a new life after they leave prison. One of them surprised me by asking for the address of a community that welcomes ex-prisoners. He explained that it was for his son who was also in prison.

"What do these visits mean for the prisoners in Wroclaw and the other towns nearby? No doubt it gives them a sign of peace and it nourishes their hope to have a chance to begin a new life. Perhaps the answer is to be found in the often repeated words: God buries our past in the heart of Christ and of our future, God will take care."

Young people from a village 40 km from Wroclaw write: "We welcomed fifty persons in our village, and the meetings were so beautiful... Now we animate the Eucharist every Sunday, and we come together once a week to share and to exchange on a theme."

From a parish in the city centre of Wroclaw: "Many people attend the weekly Sunday Mass in our parish, but few of them sing. In order to

make the celebration more beautiful, we have invited the parishioners to a song practice once a week, and we have started preparing a song book which will be available to everyone during Mass."

And from another city-centre parish. "After making the traditional visits to the families in the parish, in January, the parish priest spoke to us about one particular family who lives in great poverty: an old lady who lives with her handicapped daughter and her five–year–old grand-daughter. Neither of the two women can look after the child, and she is left to herself all day. We decided to visit them, to help with the chores and to look after the child, being with her and playing with her. In our neighbourhood, problems of alcoholism cause great hardship, for the children in particular. The preparation of the European meeting brought us into contact with the two neighbouring parishes and, since then, we have been searching together for the best way of organising some kind of help for these children that we come across every day on the streets. In one of the parishes, there is a place where the children can come to eat. The other parish has a place where the children can come to play or do their homework. A number of us who have experience of this type of work and people who would like to begin this kind of service met together in April."

Bosnia

Living in Forgiveness

A group of fifty young people from Bosnia, from the region of Sarajevo, took part in the Easter meetings at Taizé. On Sunday, Miro, from Kiseljak, spoke to the young people from many countries who were there:

"I would like to say a few words on behalf of the whole group from Bosnia. We come from the region of Sarajevo, from Central Bosnia, from a little town 35 km east of Sarajevo, Kiseljak, which is famous for its mineral water. This is the second time that we have come to Taizé. That is proof that all that happens here in Taizé means a great deal to us. Here we find time to be ourselves. The big problem of our modern life is that we always find reasons to put off till later, till tomorrow, the day after, the questions that are essential, the questions about God.

"Certain events in our lives mark us and our faith profoundly. Like the others who are here with me, I have had the opportunity — if I can express it this way — of knowing the war which changed our lives. War can change many things in a human being, but here I would like to speak about two of them.

"Firstly, the war in Bosnia has changed our attitude towards material things. What has taken ten, twenty or thirty years, or even an entire lifetime to build can collapse and disappear in a few minutes. We invest enormously in material values, but they give us very little security. Some people I know personally had many things of value, they worked hard, built houses, bought cars. But just one shell was enough, and everything was burnt and destroyed. So my question is: What is the point of labouring for a whole lifetime just to lose it all in a few minutes? That is why I think that materialism has suffered a defeat in Bosnia. Now we can see much better what is more precious than material things. Only things that cannot be destroyed in a few moments can give us a real security.

"The second thing I would like to speak about is forgiveness. Our Lord Jesus Christ often spoke about this. In the Gospels, he calls the Jews who are listening to him to forgive one another, and also to forgive others who are not Jews. Obviously, we agree with what he says. But when it comes to putting it into practice, that's a different thing. At the beginning of the war, I lost many of my friends and this word 'forgiveness' had a strange sound to it. How can you forgive someone who has caused the death of a member of the family, of a friend? And the war continued, and many people died. And I began to think that my turn was coming, soon it might be me. I had lost so many of my friends, maybe I would be the next one. I became aware that I had to change something in my way of thinking. Killing and more killing leads nowhere. It is worthless. Something has to change. And then an idea came to mind: there has to be forgiveness. If I forgive my enemy, I am sure that he will forgive me. This is the only way to stop this war from going on.

"Jesus doesn't call us to forgive enemies that are abstract or far away. He calls us to forgive real people, people who do not belong to our own nation. In the prayer that Jesus taught us, we say: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' How can we expect God's forgiveness if we are not ready to forgive one another? And we have offended God far more than our enemies have offended us. It is never easy to find the strength to forgive. We need to be humble, like little children."

Australia

Pilgrims Together with Others

New steps along the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" were taken recently in Australia. A series of meetings took place near Sydney, in the wake of other similar gatherings held in the city itself two years ago. One participant shared some of her impressions afterwards:

"The idea of being like pilgrims, journeying on a road together with other Christians, means a lot to us here. Already two years ago, there were steps on the 'pilgrimage' in various parts of Sydney. This time, it was several la towns nearby that had the opportunit welcome participants and host th weekend gatherings as well as week prayer. Many were happy to find ag the kind of enthusiasm there was years back, and the same depth in pra This initiative, with the support it ceived from the local council of church has helped us go further on the roac unity. Preparations beforehand serve bring different groups closer together a made them keen to continue. Through ganizing this 'pilgrimage,' our o search for unity has been made simp more down-to-earth, because we are n both closer to the real difficulties peo encounter and more deeply rooted in joy which hope gives us."

Peace of Heart in All Things

Brother Roger of Taizé

A brief meditation for each day of the year These short texts attempt to express real ities which we can turn to, day after day our whole life through.

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